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My name is Lisa Durand. I am here in support of HB 27.

I have been in the 9-1-1 emergency communications field since the late 1970's. I served the citizens of Hennepin County, Minnesota, and worked with the local officials to develop legislation for wireless 9-1-1 in the mid 1990s. In 1998, I moved to Kansas and was Director of Johnson County Emergency Communications in the Kansas City area. While in this position, I was appointed by the Governor to serve on the 9-1-1 Task Force, to study 9-1-1 issues, and assist in developing legislation for wireless 9-1-1. After the legislation passed, I was again asked by the Governor to serve on the 9-1-1 Oversight Committee.

I now make my home in Whitefish, and manage 9-1-1 for Flathead County. Our 9-1-1 center serves a population of over 83,000 citizens and two million visitors annually. Our County is in the process of consolidating all police, fire and EMS dispatching. This consolidation will streamline emergency communications, making our services more efficient and effective for both the 9-1-1 caller and the first responders. We will reduce the number of 9-1-1 answering positions from 10 county-wide, to 7 with this consolidation. Even with this effort we need your help.

I support HB 27, because the 9-1-1 centers across the state are struggling to provide adequate emergency communications services. The public's expectations are that when you dial 9-1-1 from a landline or wireless phone, the 9-1-1 Dispatcher that answers will know where you are, what type and amount of help you need, and provide you with instructions on what to do BEFORE help arrives. Our 9-1-1 specialists need both technology and specialized training to do their job. The current user fee does not provide enough to keep up with this demand.

HB 27 does also give cost recovery to the wireless carriers. I cannot tell you I completely agree with this portion of the bill. I would recommend you consider amending this bill to include a sunset of cost recovery for wireless carriers in four years. Wireless carriers are not regulated, and can recover costs by increasing their rates.

Without an increase in funding for 9-1-1 centers, it will be very difficult for our center, and others, to buy equipment that locates the 9-1-1 caller, provide dispatcher training so our dispatchers may give life-saving instructions to the mother whose baby stopped breathing, and Computer-Aided Dispatch software systems that track emergencies and responders, ensuring the closest help gets sent to the scene of the emergency. Our job continues to become more challenging each year. It is important we keep up with those challenges. What could be more important than 9-1-1?

Thank you for listening, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.